



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Great Government Through the General Management System – Quality, Timeliness, Value
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

CLASS SPECIFICATION

CLASSIFIED

MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANT

Class No. 004838

■ CLASSIFICATION PURPOSE

Under immediate supervision, to assist mental health professionals and staff members in planning, developing, delivering, and evaluating mental health rehabilitation and recovery services for individuals and groups of persons; and to perform related work as required.

■ DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Mental Health Assistant is distinguished as being an entry level class responsible for performing specific assignments under close supervision. Mental Health Assistants apply technical skills in performing their work and may contribute to planning and implementing psycho-social rehabilitation programs. This class differs from a lower level class, Social Services Aide, in that the Mental Health Assistants apply technical skills in the performance of essential functions.

■ FUNCTIONS

The examples of functions listed in the class specification are representative but not necessarily exhaustive or descriptive of any one position in the class. Management is not precluded from assigning other related functions not listed herein if such duties are a logical assignment for the position.

Essential Functions:

1. Responds to personal or telephone inquiries from clients or citizens by providing information on the County's mental health programs.
2. Communicates with county mental health professional and non-professional staff regarding demographics of local communities.
3. Performs community outreach by visiting representatives of public and private agencies, providing information on county mental health services available to members of the public, or providing assistance to individuals and their family members who are experiencing mental health problems.
4. Acts as liaison between mental health professional staff and members of the community or clients who do not have immediate access to mental health services due to cultural barriers such as language and socio-economic status.
5. Under the direct supervision and guidance of mental health professional staff, may respond to phone calls from persons experiencing suicidal thoughts or other mental health problems; may respond to phone calls from persons involved in life threatening or other emergency situations.
6. Assists licensed mental health staff in conducting individual and group therapy sessions at county mental health clinics.
7. Assists in maintaining resource files and reference materials such as books or tapes that pertain to rehabilitation topics.
8. Serves as an advocate for clients who need assistance when interacting with representatives of governmental or community agencies.
9. May provide assistance during recreational and occupational therapy sessions by providing instructions and lifting, carrying, maneuvering, or transporting clients who may have physical limitations.
10. May participate as a member of inter-agency committees that provide information on mental health services and develop methods to meet the needs of clients.
11. May participate on a team of mental health staff to give presentations to representatives of the community or members of the public.
12. Provides courteous, high quality service to members of the public by personally responding to requests for service or making appropriate referral.

■ KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of:

- Socio-environmental factors that impact the mental health of individuals.
- Basic mental health principles and practices pertaining to working effectively with individuals and groups.
- Basic principles of crisis intervention.
- Telephone, office, and online etiquette.
- County customer service objectives and strategies.
- Concepts pertaining to cultural and diversity awareness and skill development when interacting with clients and persons of varying cultures and socio-economic status.
- Mental health programs and services available to the community.

Skills and Abilities to:

- Actively promote citizen participation in programs or activities pertaining to mental health prevention and treatment, mental health education, and therapeutic methods and approaches.
- Exercise sound and logical judgment applied to clinical mental health situations.
- Organize and prioritize workload in order to meet strict deadlines.
- Serve as a team member and actively participate and contribute to committees and task forces.
- Communicate effectively in writing when taking notes, writing correspondence, and preparing activity or incident reports.
- Communicate effectively with a variety of individuals representing diverse cultures and backgrounds and function calmly in challenging situations, which require a high degree of sensitivity, tact and diplomacy.
- Treat County employees, representatives of outside agencies and members of the public with courtesy and respect.
- Assess the customer's immediate needs and ensure customer's receipt of needed services through personal service or referral.
- Provide prompt, efficient and responsive service.
- Exercise appropriate judgment in answering questions and releasing information; analyze and project consequences of decisions and/or recommendations.

■ EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE

Education, training and/or experience that demonstrate possession of knowledge, skills and abilities stated above. An example of qualifying experience is: one (1) year of experience performing services for a mental health agency or program assisting persons who are experiencing a variety of social and personal problems.

Desirable Qualification:

The completion of courses from an accredited college or university emphasizing behavioral sciences, health and human services, community health, and community welfare.

■ ESSENTIAL PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The physical characteristics described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of the classification. Reasonable accommodation may be made to enable an individual with qualified disabilities to perform the essential functions of a job, on a case-by-case basis.

Continuous upward and downward flexion of the neck. Frequent: sitting, repetitive use of hands to operate computers, printers, copiers, telephones, cellular phones and other office equipment. Occasional: walking, standing, bending and twisting of neck, bending and twisting of waist, squatting, simple grasping, reaching above and below shoulder level, and lifting and carrying of files weighing up to 10 pounds and lifting, carrying, and maneuvering of mental health clients while assisting mental health staff in conducting recreational and occupational therapy.

■ SPECIAL NOTES, LICENSES, OR REQUIREMENTS

Licenses

A valid California class C driver's license, which must be maintained throughout employment in this class, is required at time of appointment, or the ability to arrange necessary and timely transportation for field travel. Employees in this class may be required to use their own vehicle.

Certificates/Requirements

None required.

Training Requirement

Incumbents must successfully complete training on Preventing and Responding to Assaultive Behavior (PRAB) within the first 12

months of employment.

Working Conditions

Work primarily takes place in an office environment, although work occasionally takes place in the field when making visits to the community. Travel is required to locations within the county. Work may involve serving on a stand-by basis and working irregular hours such as evenings, weekends, and holidays. Incumbents interact with mental health clients who may be severely disturbed and potentially violent and/or clients with a history of chronic mental illness and developmental disabilities as a dual diagnosis.

Background Investigation

Must have a reputation for honesty and trustworthiness. Misdemeanor and/or felony convictions may be disqualifying depending on type, number, severity, and recency. Prior to appointment, candidates will be subject to a background investigation.

Probationary Period

Incumbents appointed to permanent positions in this classification shall serve a probationary period of six months (Civil Service Rule 4.2.5).

New: March 6, 1981
Revised: May 3, 1988
Reviewed: Spring 2003
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